



## **Case Scenarios: Grade-Based Acceleration Strategies**

**Grade-based acceleration** generally is defined as a practice that shortens the number of years a student participates in the K-12 school system. Some of the options supported by research include: grade skipping, grade telescoping, non-graded classes, multi-grade classes, testing out, early admission to college. As a viable solution for students who are very independent, persistent and highly motivated, ensure that their level of cognitive functioning, personality, school-related attitudes and motivation support the type of acceleration chosen. Appraising the “whole” child will help determine if this option will be successful.

### **Individual Student Case Scenarios:**

The following case scenarios incorporate various strategies that match the subject-based strategies to the student's academic abilities. Determine if there are any conditions within the scenarios to which you can relate regarding individual students with whom you currently provide educational services.

**Scroll down** to the following page to view case scenarios that incorporate various strategies that match the curriculum and instruction to the student's academic abilities.

## Case Scenarios – Subject-Based Acceleration Strategies

Click on an individual case study name  
or  
click [here](#) to scroll through all the scenarios.

Case Study Name	Suggested Strategies
<a href="#">Lateesha</a>	Grade skipping
<a href="#">Beth</a>	Grade acceleration Early admission to college
<a href="#">Kaley</a>	Grade Skipped into 5th grade Grade Telescoping when she transitions into middle school
<a href="#">Tomas</a>	Better candidate for subject-based acceleration than for grade-based acceleration: Testing out Advanced Placement Accelerated courses Correspondence courses Concurrent enrollment at the local college
<a href="#">Jasmin</a>	Early admission to college



## **Lateesha**

The superintendent of a small school district called me to ask if I would help them make some decisions regarding a fourth-grade student named Lateesha. The school had given her the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC-III), and she had scored at the very top of the test. They had also administered the sixth-grade version of the Stanford Achievement Test, on which she had scored in the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile or higher on every subtest, even though she currently was in fourth grade. The school system wanted to know how to keep Lateesha in their school rather than see her parents remove her to a private school, which the parents perceived as more academically rigorous.

Lateesha's parents, the school principals of the intermediate school (grades three through four) and the middle school (grades five through eight), her current fourth-grade teacher, the middle school gifted services coordinator, and I met to discuss possible educational plans for Lateesha. Over the course of three meetings in the spring of that year, we decided that Lateesha would:

- skip fifth grade and begin middle school in the fall as a sixth grader;
- attend seventh-grade honors English classes;
- take German at the high school (instead of Spanish, which was offered to all students in the middle school – Lateesha had already studied Spanish over two summers in a foreign language camp);
- have a compacted curriculum in sixth-grade social studies, completing what she didn't know of it in the first semester and then doing an independent study on U.S. History (17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries) in the second semester.
- be allowed to test out of whatever math and science curriculum she had already mastered as the units of study occurred, and then spend her extra time on other enrichments in those areas.

Lateesha's parents were pleased with the plan, and it was implemented fully the following fall. When her seventh-grade English teacher noted that Lateesha did not write fluently, plans were made for Lateesha to work with the gifted resource teacher weekly to improve her writing fluency. This resource teacher also helped Lateesha develop time-management skills to accomplish her varied assignments at different grade levels as she moved daily between school buildings. Lateesha reported that she felt very challenged by her studies but was concerned that she was missing out on the opportunity to make sixth-grade friends. The resource teacher encouraged her to join a book discussion group held at lunchtime that was made up of highly motivated readers. Although the math compacting continued and Lateesha worked much of the time on some small group experiences in the science classroom with her sixth-grade classmates, even though it meant she wasn't progressing as quickly in science as she could have. By the end of the year, she had two close friends who loved to read the same books she did and she was well accepted in all of her classes. A similar plan without the grade-skip was developed for the next year.



### **Grade-Based Acceleration Options Proposed/Used with Lateesha**

Grade skipping

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## **Beth**

Beth was 14 years old and in eighth grade at a suburban middle school when I first met her. She had just received her scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), a test normally taken by high school seniors in preparation for college entrance. She and her parents were quite surprised by her scores – she had scored 680 on the Verbal and 690 on the Quantitative sections of the test out of a possible 800 for each section. In light of her superior performance on this test taken four years early, the family wanted to know what they should ask the high school to do for their daughter. Beth expressed a strong interest in science and math and “hoped” the high school would let her take more challenging classes in those subjects. It was also clear, based on her high verbal score, that she did not need ninth- or tenth-grade English classes. I agreed to work with the high school to see what kind of an individualized curriculum we could design for Beth. Child study team meetings were convened and included a school counselor, the department heads of English, science, math, and social studies, the Assistant principal, and me.

During the first three meetings, I shared research results on the effect of acceleration programs for very bright students. What the teachers and administrators learned was that the research clearly showed that no matter what form of acceleration we might plan for Beth, the academic gains would be very positive, and that her social adjustment and self-esteem would not suffer from a more fast-paced, complex program of studies. Then the six of us got down to the business of designing a program for Beth. In the end, the school agreed to offer a program where Beth would:

- attend high school all four years;
- take two trimesters of the basic writing and communication courses for ninth grade, after which she could elect to take any literature course from any year;
- take a math placement test to determine which math courses she could take, but not be advanced beyond the tenth-grade course in her first year;
- take the required ninth-grade earth science with other ninth graders;
- test out of any or all of the required social studies courses in order to replace them with substitutes of her own choosing.

Beth and her parents rejected this plan. They felt it left no educational alternative for her except to continue to move slowly through the required courses, which she felt she had already mastered. They chose, instead, to have Beth attend the program for the Exceptionally Gifted at Mary Baldwin college, a program designed for gifted students like Beth who are well advanced beyond their peers in high school. There, Beth was able to complete four years of high school and four years of undergraduate college in four years. She was one of 30 other girls as bright as she, and she felt very much at home. Beth left her family and home four years earlier than she and her parents had expected, but for the first time in her life, she was literally surrounded by other very bright (and sociable) girls. She graduated with honors from Mary Baldwin, earned a graduate degree, and today is a very successful technical writer in the sciences.



### **Grade-Based Acceleration Options Proposed/Used with Beth**

Grade acceleration

Early admission to college

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**Kaley**

Currently in fourth grade, Kaley goes to fifth grade for science and reading. She is making good progress working independently on the sixth-grade math curriculum, and she will have completed it by the end of the year. Her intelligence test scores are in the highly gifted range (159 IQ). She has made good friends with two other bright girls in fifth grade and plays with them outside of school as well. She has difficulty being accepted by her fourth-grade classmates. She generally works independently and has interests and concerns that are not shared by these age peers. She often describes her classmates as “babyish.” The other students don’t like that she is different and call her “weird,” but this does not particularly disturb her at the present time. She takes violin lessons outside of school and plays with a local youth orchestra, where she is concertmistress. She is generally positive about her abilities and has good self-esteem. She does not mind school, but wishes she could have more time to socialize with her fifth-grade friends. She is the oldest child in her family.



**Grade-Based Acceleration Options Proposed/Used with Kaley**

<b>Current Consideration</b>	Grade Skipped into 5 <sup>th</sup> grade
<b>Future Consideration</b>	Grade Telescoping when she transitions into middle school

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## **Tomas**

Currently, Tomas is taking the last of his high school math in a local program, even though he is only in eighth grade. Even though math is his “thing,” Tomas also performs above eighth-grade level in all of his other courses and is taking enriched classes offered in English, science, and social studies at his local high school. When he was in fourth grade, the psychologist reported his IQ as 135, in the gifted range. He has performed in the school play this past year and is on the school’s soccer team, where he is one of the better players. He recently took the SAT exams designed for eleventh- and twelfth-grade students and scored 590 on the verbal portion and 750 on the math portion of the exam out of a possible 800 for each section. He is looking forward to playing on the soccer team at the high school and has already been “recruited” by the coach there. His high school has a strong theater program, and he hopes to participate in that as well. Tomas is an only child of parents who strongly value education. He gets along well with children of all ages and truly enjoys his social interactions at school and on the soccer field. At the same time, though, he loves his enriched and accelerated classes, particularly in math.



### **Grade-Based Acceleration Options Proposed/Used with Tomas**

<b>Current Consideration</b>	Tomas is a better candidate for subject-based acceleration than for grade-based acceleration thus allowing him to participate in the arts and sports that he enjoys.
<b>Future Considerations</b>	Allow Tomas to test out of any subjects he chooses at the high school level and encourage him to take Advanced Placement and accelerated courses. Considering his performance in math, provide correspondence courses or concurrent enrollment at the local college.

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**Jasmin**

Currently in tenth grade, Jasmin is enrolled in four Advanced Placement courses (Calculus, Chemistry, English Literature, American History) – first for the school, which usually requires students to be in eleventh grade before taking AP classes. She is doing well in her classes, but is concerned about what she will study next year. She works on the school literary magazine and is a photographer on the school newspaper, which means she regularly makes contact with a wide variety of students. She frequently complains that the kids her age “are so immature.” When she was tested in the primary grades, her IQ was measured at 149, in the highly gifted range. She is well organized in all she does. She thinks and acts independently, and she has never had a need for a large group of friends. She has mentioned to her counselor that she would like to leave high school early and go to the local university.



**Grade-Based Acceleration Options Proposed/Used with Jasmin**

<b>Current Consideration</b>	Jasmin should be allowed to enter college early, beginning with her eleventh grade year. Therefore, she needs to take the SAT or ACT as early as possible so that she can apply to colleges, preferably in the local area.
<b>Future Considerations</b>	She might want to consider commuting from home the first couple of years as she transitions away from home until a decision is made to continue locally or to transfer to a more selective university.

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